

25. 8. 1913

21/1 chn-302

Sir *

Your candid & very encouraging article on the difficulties of the Preacher (Aug. 22nd) induces me to come before you the layman's point of view. It seems to me that we have some reason to rejoice only in our clergy but in the quality of their preaching. Persons who wander a good deal on the continent in the summer months must be impressed by the comparatively large & devout congregations that assemble for the English Church Service, very much so by the quality of the preaching which, if not often brilliant, is almost always sound & scriptural. All the same there is some sense of futility both in the lay & clerical mind. After a long life-time of listening to sermons, the hearer has hardly a sense of progression even of education, still it is probably the sincere modesty of the preachers which makes them willing to delegate the sermon to the lower place in the office of public worship. The labour laid on the old clergy seems enormous to an outsider. The task of preparing & delivering 100 or so short disconnected essays in a year, say at least 1000 in 10 yrs, without the sense of progression in a firm task of encompassing a continuous work, must be very laborious & a little tiresome. The cornered-in, narrow sermons are not better & more inspiring but that they keep up a miserable spiritual level. At the same time there is something wrong. The deliberate skipping of a house of God should, no doubt, be the preacher's aim rather than the raking up of a prodigious heap of unmatched pebbles, a recognition of this fact must be clearly discouraging to most Preachers, however excellent their sermons. However grateful I appreciate their congregations.

I have ventured to call your article "your article" there being so very encouraging, but perhaps it is a symptom of "divine discontent" as may have struck many of us that our Church has a unique opportunity for nourishing a more complete Christianity - that we had not hitherto yet seen.

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The non-Anglican Protestant bodies, though they may be no longer conscious of the fact, seem to be still hide-bound by that "tie of the soul" described as "imputed righteousness" which may belong to the Pauline philosophy, but not to the philosophy of the Lord as expressed in His own teaching. The Roman Church has developed a so-called Petrine philosophy, upon a single saying of our Lord's. The teaching of the Orthodox Church we need not enquire into just now, but the Anglican Church seems to be on the whole definitely Christian in the sense that it accepts the "I say unto you" of our Lord as final & authoritative, but surely it is in error in neglecting the science & the proportion of things following the lead of the Catholic Church low which we long belong, do we confine our meditation too exclusively to the Inunction, or the Atonement, or what we call the Moral teaching of the Gospels? Could not our Church make room for the teaching of the one Consummate Philosophy, delivered by our Lord with extraordinary emphasis of elevation, with exquisite poetic illustration, with incessant endeavour during the three years of His ministry? It would seem that our Lord's appeal is far more frequently intellectual than emotional or moral. He would have us, — "discern", "know", "understand", all of which must be accomplished by intellectual effort; not the effort of analysis, but of spiritual insight. I wonder would it be possible among Clergy meeting before us this progressive Christian teaching, with the help of some Chronological harmony of the Gospels, agreeing, for example, that their people should definitely study section after section of the Gospel history, week by week; coming to Church with their minds alert & their hearts inclined, and thereby, for a sermon dealing perhaps with some point of special interest in the passage studied so that the work of Preacher & people should be definite & progressive.

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One sermon a week on these lines would still leave one ^a 2
or his sermons - & deal with the set lessons, Epistles or gospel,
none of which could be well without.

But I suppose most men only read the Lectures with however
much pleasure & profit, what I am venturing to suggest is an
effort to convince, realize, bring our spiritual insight to bear,
week by week, one comparatively short passage of the gospel
narrative. Because this is Utopian but then Utopia is the
only country at which the traveller aims.

I write with very sincere confidence, knowing there may be
differences in the way which I do not suspect; but perhaps a comparison
in the columns will tend to show us the limitations & the
possibilities. Meantime I beg to remain w^r considerate alien
of these meanderings which I do now,

A grateful listener

Wall Walker.